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# The Spirit of Music in Education

By WILLIAM L. TOMLINS

Invoking the Unused Powers of the individual for a larger life after the war.

## I

Every one recognizes that the latent possibilities of the individual are far greater than have been developed. Exceptional ability along one or more lines is the heritage of all, and no one need remain on the plane of the commonplace.

Inasmuch as the power to express in practical form our highest ideals is a priceless possession of life, whatever can open a way for the development of our latent powers deserves our profound consideration.

It has been often observed that a calamity, be it fire, earthquake, or war, will sometimes immediately release the hidden and unsuspected capacities of certain individuals, who will never again return to the level of their former selves.

It would be foolish, however, to think of the shock of a great calamity as the only means of awakening such powers. There must be in the nature of things, a more gentle, a more methodical way, to accomplish this priceless result.

I affirm that such a means does exist, and is within easy reach of the individual. I purpose to demonstrate that this means, applied in the manner I have discovered, and which I gladly make available to the public does actually produce an awakening of individual powers.

The most readily obtainable results have been demonstrated with classes of children. But I can affirm, from much experience, that the same methods accomplish comparable results with adults.

## II

The war has done much to awaken such powers. We hear on every hand of men who had hitherto lived for themselves alone, who, under the spell of patriotism, have forfeited personal comfort, careers, cherished life opportunities, and have gone forth gladly to lay their all upon the altar of the common good. Because of this experience, millions of men and women are today living a larger life, larger by far, than they were before the war. It is impossible to imagine that such men and women will ever be content, or even able, to go back to the old order of things—to their old states of mind.

When we examine closely we find that these awakened individuals have put first the things of the highest humanity—the things of justice, and freedom, and right. They have put the universal welfare before their own personal well being, even before life itself. This transformation has made the faculties of mind and body servants of a higher purpose, which is the true order of man's being.

This vision of what might be in America, in the world and in the personal life of any individual, if a scientific means might be found to awaken these inner powers, and bring them forth into daily life now and here, is too glorious a vision to be lost or clouded. The problem is how to make this vision real.

## III

Some years ago I made the discovery that the fine quality of song voice generally regarded as exceptional is really the heritage of all children. And I made demonstrations with hundreds and thousands of boys and girls who,

in mass and groups as well as individually, sang with voices radiant and beautiful.

Of course there were incredulous people who maintained that these were exceptional children, and had received an exceptional degree of training, whereas in fact they were taken at random wherever offered, were taught only in classes, and were given only one lesson a week.

A remarkable thing about these lessons was that the conventional music exercises were conspicuous by their absence. Visiting teachers said that after I had talked to the children for ten minutes or so, they were given a few breathing exercises and the like, whereupon they burst into song with a spirit and beauty of voice that was amazing. It was something these visitors could not explain. But it was all simple enough. The short talk to the pupils had served, as it was designed, to arouse in them a quality of life—a sense of the joy of living—which for its utterance called out this higher quality of voice. I might have talked to them in another strain to awaken in them other kinds of life, such as would call out a burst of laughter, a shout of triumph or a sigh of sympathetic sorrow, all of which are forms of vital utterance. But deeper than these, more vital and beautiful, is the song life. This it was that I awakened in these children and called into expression.

Who has not felt the charm of children's voices as they rang out in peals of laughter? And who would ever dream of teaching a normal child to form a smiling face or to give out a merry laugh? And yet we spend years in technical exercises, and at that fail, perhaps, in the spontaneity of voice which, by proceeding along lines of nature, would be obtained in a very short time.

I don't for a moment mean to say that music reading and song performance come without study, but surely

they can be gained sooner and better when, back of them, there is the life seeking to express itself.

But while it is true that the awakened inner life gives beauty and sincerity to the voice, it is also true that there are different degrees of this life, some deeper than others, and that the deepest are the richest and best. Here, for instance, is a young man grimacing before a mirror. He is vainly striving with might and main to wreath his face in a radiant smile, but which, however, turns out to be only a self-conscious smirk. I take the mirror from him and proceed to tell him about the circus we are going to, whereupon his face at once breaks into a smile of anticipation. What he failed to do by outer, physical means comes of its own accord when appealed to from within. But this is not all; for when I talk about his old, bed-ridden mother, whom he dearly loves, and bring him to realize that soon she will be restored to health and the activities of daily life, his face becomes transfigured with joy—a radiance as far beyond the pleasure smile, as that was more than the self-conscious smirk.

We may see, then, that while the inner life is far more than the outer one, the innermost is supreme. And all that is true of the loving smile is equally true of the noble voice. Here, then, are the two processes continually acting and re-acting upon each other: The song voice going out and out, and the song-life going in and in.

And so it was that I came to be recognized as a teacher who began, not with music and song, but with the inner life of the child, and then called on that life to voice itself in song.

It was but natural then that when this new life began to manifest itself in various ways—in initiative, individuality, and the things of character-building—the incredulous doubtfully asked, "How can music and song do these things?" They made the mistake of assuming that the voice itself

was the cause, whereas, as we have seen, the true cause was this deeper life of the child which had been awakened and which called the voice into action as its first means of expression.

#### IV

If there were a blackboard I would mark on it three circles, an outermost circle, within that a smaller one, and within this smaller one a third; and that series of circles should stand for the boy in the school. The outermost division is action, what he does; the middle is knowledge, what he thinks, and feels and wills; the centre is being, what he is.

For a great many years in the past education was mostly concerned with mentality. The boy was taught to calculate, to plan; but he was also enabled by these means to scheme. Language was given him to reveal himself, but he can use this power to conceal himself—to deceive you. Then there came manual training, in which this hidden life of mentality below the surface was channelled into the outer world of action as a very wholesome process. Yet, however, there has been no direct application in education to the spirit of the boy—and that is the most important part of him. Down there, hidden in the very centre of the boy, are germs—weed-germs as well as a flower-germ—that are yet latent, of which you, his teacher, and you, his parent, know nothing so far as that boy is concerned; and of which the boy himself knows nothing; weed-germs which await the stimulating influence of some temptation, tomorrow, or next year, or five years from today, to spring up and challenge for control of the boy.

These hidden recesses of the boy's nature awaiting unfoldment and use are matters of great interest to the professional educator. And the educational specialist — the psychologist — has been investigating them for a great many years, working very slowly and laboriously.

Now I claim that with this inner life of song you can flash an illuminating light deep down into the boy's nature. Music will not do what the psychologist is doing — will not compare, will not go into theories and arrive at knowledge; but music will do more than illumine these depths for the professor's benefit; it will arouse the deeper nature of the boy, and that is more than theory and more than knowledge; that is *life*.

Once aroused, this hidden nature of the boy will never go to sleep again; it will want to come out to meet the professor, to meet the rest of the world, to express itself. And when these depths of the boy are aroused, awakened, and determined to come out, they will give a complete revaluation to all things, and make the superficial and the commonplace things of life seem trivial, compared with the larger things of honor, purpose, and individuality.

#### V

I have had the felicity to find a way of direct approach to this deepest power in the individual, first to develop it and then to unite it with his physical and mental powers. In this way he is made complete: body, mind and spirit.

To judge what this means, think of the increase when mind was brought to bear upon and guide our physical powers, and then consider that a far greater gain is ours when spirit is unfolded within us.

The boy whose powers are merely physical is only a fraction of his true self. Add to these his mental ones and you will have only half your boy. To make him responsive to the life that is all about him and making its appeal to him, you must complete your boy; you must arouse every part of his being: body, mind, heart, will and spirit.

Blend these in unity and you will get not only unity but power and joy.

Already the boy's physical, mental

and affectional powers are aroused; now awaken his spiritual ones. Make him as alive in his innermost being as when a little child he was in his outer powers — full of joy and play, tireless in energy — and you will have him pulsing with the great world life of which he is a part, just as he did as a little fellow when in touch with his play world.

The thing to do, then, is to complete the boy. No matter what the cost in money, time and trouble, even if it means tearing down the school house and building it afresh, complete your boy. Unless you do so he cannot contend with the advancing life everywhere around him.

If these things are true, they are of tremendous import to the young who are forming habits of life upon which the future will be based. It is too much, perhaps, to hope that those of us, trained in giving emphasis to the merely intellectual education of the child, will readily grasp the full significance of the life principle here presented. But it should be evident to all who are concerned with the completeness of the life development of children that here is something far too important to be ignored; a principle which must be accepted as a new force in education.

#### BOOKSHELVES FOR SUPERVISORS

Every supervisor feels more and more keenly the need for a library of his own which will give him information at a moment's notice on any of the hundred problems he has to face. And those of us who have attended the meetings of the National Conference have been bewildered, from year to year, by the mass of material offered us by the different publishers. What books are most reliable and most useful to the supervisor?

As an attempt to answer this question, three book-shelves are being prepared for the Nashville Conference.

The first of these, one foot long, will contain the best and most representative small collection of books for the supervisor; the collection which he might well buy to start his public-school music library. The second shelf will be three feet long, and the third five feet long; these will include much material that the supervisor will find useful, material which he should add to his library as he is able.

Some fifty supervisors, representing varied view-points and various sections of the country, have been asked to give suggestions for these three collections of books. There is a notable agreement among them as to the most important books, those for the one-foot shelf. The results of these suggestions will be of great interest to all thoughtful supervisors.

Mr. Gebhart is arranging a prominent display-place for these miniature libraries. With the books will be found lists giving publishers and prices.

#### AND THEY SAY THE SOUTH IS SLOW!

I know that you will be interested to read the following quotation from a letter received from Mrs. O. C. Hamilton, President Saturday Music Club, Asheville, N. C. It is typical of the letters I am receiving in reply to my appeals to the music clubs in the state:

"In reply to your letter of recent date, I wish to state at our meeting of the Saturday Music Club, last week, we voted to take a membership in the Music Supervisors' National Conference. I also hope to be able to have our county and city supervisors attend this conference. I hope the Board of Education both of the city and county will defray the expenses of our supervisors. You may always count on the Saturday Music Club endorsing and helping out all musical matters in the state."